



Committee on Appropriations

Testimony of The Connecticut Council for Education Reform (CCER)

H.B. No. 5014 AN ACT MAKING ADJUSTMENTS TO STATE EXPENDITURES AND REVENUES FOR THE FISCAL YEAR ENDING JUNE 30, 2013

Good evening. My name is Rae Ann Knopf and I am the Executive Director for the Connecticut Council for Education Reform (CCER). The Council represents the business and civic voice in advocating for comprehensive education reform efforts to close Connecticut's achievement gap, while raising academic achievement for all students in our state. I am submitting testimony today in support of Governor Malloy's proposed education budget adjustments.

Governor Malloy's recommendation to add \$128 million to the State Department of Education budget is a clear step in the right direction to closing Connecticut's achievement gap between low income and non-low income students. The Governor recognizes that we cannot wait any longer and this targeted investment in innovative reform-focused initiatives will provide the necessary funding to begin making a difference in the lives of Connecticut's children. We applaud his specific recommendations to create a Commissioner's Network that will focus efforts to turnaround our lowest achieving schools, as well as additional funding for quality early childhood education and the variety of initiatives to assist in the development of talented teachers and administrators. These are proven ways that will begin not only changing the way students are taught, but also how they learn.

These recommendations will go a long way toward comprehensive and meaningful education reform and it is imperative we provide the Department of Education with the support and resources needed to begin changing the way students are educated. The Commissioner has already begun to make some necessary changes to the Department of Education, by the creation of a new structure and re-organization plan including the development of key focus areas within the department to address specific areas of reform. We need to ensure these efforts continue.

Our state is still attempting to get back on its feet from some very difficult budget years. The time is now to invest wisely and focus on the areas that need our assistance the most. We cannot maintain our standing as a state having the highest achievement gap in the nation any longer. We need to do what we can to provide Connecticut's students with the best education possible and invest our dollars wisely. Consider that on an annual basis, approximately 9,000 students drop out of high school in Connecticut. In addition to the higher unemployment and incarceration rates these students will face, our state loses over \$4 billion dollars in economic benefit over the course of these students lifetime. An investment, such as that called for in the Governor's budget, will go a long way toward making up this lost revenue.

Furthermore, Connecticut's economy depends on an educated workforce and if we are to maintain competitiveness on a national and international scale, we must educate and retain the best and the brightest. The efforts put forward this session by the Malloy Administration are a key component in ensuring that every student in Connecticut receives a high-quality education.

We urge you to support the additional funding put forward by Governor Malloy to assist the Department and the State reach its goals.

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